

## OUR CLASS

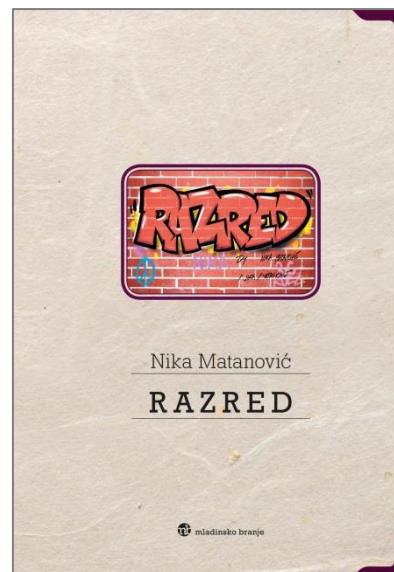
Written by: **Nika Matanović**

Format: 14.8 × 21.5cm, black and white print, hardcover, 296 pages

Age: 12+

**Our Class is an unusual and fresh young adult novel. The story is told by a teenage girl who should have probably been bursting with hormones, but she rather spends her time reading, immersing herself in stories and even writing novels about her peers.**

Link: <https://zalozba-pivec.com/knjigarna/razred>



## Synopsis

It all starts on September 1st, the first day of the semester, a day that many teens hate, the day the summer holidays end. For four school friends and their friends, it's the start of the "monotony of exams, dusty textbooks and studying that, no matter which way you look at it, has no point". Greg, the cool guy, Barbie-doll Zara, odd girl Sabrina and the new girl, Nonto, couldn't be more different. But through their stories we learn how the class is ruled by (tough) teachers, alliances between friends, puberty, first loves and family drama.

Our Class is a novel with a unique story where the narrative is interwoven with first-person tales of the four main characters that alternate from one character to the next in the style of diary entries. All four are school friends and are in the 8th grade of primary school. Greg, the only male representative, explains in the first entry that all classes in every primary school are divided up into three groups: the cool guys, the Barbie girls and the misfits. The cool guys, a group which of course includes him, are the most popular boys in class and only hang out with the popular Barbie girls, like Zara, while the only thing the misfits have in common is that their popularity is basically non-existent, where their main protagonist is Sabrina, who is a misfit by choice. With a new school year comes a new group, a group with only one member and her name is Nonto.

All four main characters are brought together by the fact that none of them really fit in their groups; Greg wishes he could break free of the invisible boundaries of being the cool guy and get closer to Sabrina, with whom he spends most of his time anyway when no-one sees him. And it's not like Sabrina is indifferent towards him, quite the opposite. Zara battles self-image problems and tries to find happiness in her modelling and new friends, who are in fact far from that. Nonto is facing a culture shock, as she moved from the Republic of South Africa with her family when her mother, who is from Slovenia, got a job there. And it is not only her cultural background that makes her stand out from the other people in her class but also her skin colour.

She has to deal with prejudice from both her peers and her teachers, and with the loneliness she experiences as she has no friends in her new country, as well as her longing to move back home to South Africa.

During the school year, from September to June, all four kids grow up, get through some hardships, but, in the end, everything turns out just great.

Greg and Sabrina are neighbours and good friends, when there's nobody around. No-one at school knows about their relationship. But just before New Year's Eve, Greg decides to take the plunge and ask Sabrina out on a date....which ends in disaster. Thanks to a misunderstanding, Sabrina is an hour late to their date and Greg, thinking that she had changed her mind, drinks too much and gets together with Zara. When Sabrina finally makes it to the date, she sees them, Greg's friends tease her about it and she leaves feeling angry and hurt.

All of Greg's attempts to try and apologise to Sabrina end up in their quarrelling and shouting at each other, resulting in them not being on speaking terms for quite some months. In the end they are forced to face together as they are both performing in the school play as the lead roles. In the last chapter, Greg find the courage to confess how he feels to Sabrina and they become a couple.

As the head of the Barbie girls, Zara appears to be just as arrogant and vain as all the girls in her group, but in fact she comes from an estranged family and broken home. After her father abandoned the family following the death of her sister Macey that he never got over, she was left with only her mother in her life. Macey died because of the effects of anorexia and bulimia, all because she wanted to become a model. And Zara is now following in her footsteps. She gets caught up in a whirlwind of dieting, purging, denying herself things and neglecting all the important things in her life. Her mother, a formerly successful model, loves her daughter's new look and is blind to the reality that is unfolding in front of her.

Zara's problems push her to the brink, with even her mother giving up on her after she winds up in hospital, instead taking her to live with her father where Zara finds refuge with her father's new wife. Although she knows there is a long journey of recovery ahead, her story ends with a touch of optimism.

Nonto feels completely lost in her new surroundings. With no friends, her only sanctuary is her grandmother's, where she goes to stay every once in a while. There, she meets a boy called Noah who family situation is a tough one. His father is a drunk and becomes violent, beating his wife and son. The two kids are brought together by their need for closeness and can think of no other solution to their problems than running away from home. At first, Nonto doesn't have a real reason to run away, but when a girl in her class accuses her of theft and their teacher does not even doubt the accusation due to the dark colour of Nonto's skin, her world comes crashing down. She joins Noah in his escape and they live together on the streets where they are forced to steal to survive. Nonto cannot bring herself to steal money or food, which leads her to leave the group of people she and Noah found themselves in after an argument. Noah followed her and, after an adventure that lasted several days, the police eventually finds them and takes them back home. Nonto is relieved to find that her parents took her back in and were not angry with her. Noah was also spared from going to live with his violent father any more.

Alongside the main storyline of the four heroes of the tale, the reader learns of other smaller side stories of the other school children. The school year finally comes to an end and the kids can't wait for their holidays to begin.

## About the author

Nika Matanović (2000) is a young writer who began telling stories before she even began to read or write, dictating them to her parents and teachers. When she learnt how to read and write, she began writing down the stories by herself. Her gift for writing was spurred on by her great love of reading. She makes sure to read everything that is published in the field of children's literature.

Nika goes to high school, is an excellent student and also interested in the theatre - being a member of the school drama group. In her free time she is a completely normal teenager and loves to spend time with her friends.

She first began publishing her work in 2013 when she was still only in primary school. That is when her first longer narrative story came out, bearing the title Don't Panic (Brez panike) which is about a group of teens that find themselves on a real adventure when they go on a school trip.

Her next book came out in 2016, a more complex novel titled Our Class (Razred), which she wrote when she was fourteen. Nika is currently writing her third novel.

